

La Crosse FRO Accomplishment Highlights Report

Diversity Outreach:

Enlighten the Shadows

04/16/2004

Six eighth grade students learned first hand what it was like to be wildlife and fishery biologists. These inexpensive outreach activities can have major impacts on natural resources, our careers as Service employees, and on future generations.

As fishery and wildlife biologists that work for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, we sometimes take our exciting careers for granted. It is when we see the faces of younger generations light up at the discovery of the type of work we perform, that we truly appreciate the impact we have on the world we live. As part of the Junior Achievement Program at La Crescent Middle School in La Crescent, Minnesota, six eighth grade students job shadowed three different Fish and Wildlife Offices on April 16th for half a day. The La Crosse Fishery Resource Office (FRO), La Crosse Fish Health Center (FHC) and La Crosse District of the Upper Mississippi National Wildlife Refuge revealed what it was like to work as fishery and wildlife biologists. The eager students viewed equipment such as taggers, nets, boats, microscopes in the laboratories, offices and garages of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Resource Center in Onalaska, Wisconsin. Students peered into microscopes to learn what healthy fish cells looked like compared to fish cells that had been infected with a virus in the Virology Lab. A live electroshocking demonstration was provided by the La Crosse FRO to give students an idea how fish are sampled. Interested "future biologists" were encouraged to contact the USFWS in the summer months to gain hands-on experiences by volunteering.

Heidi Keuler

Diversity Outreach:



Biologists Cast Longer Shadows

04/21/2004

Natasha Nelson, a Bangor High School student, inoculating host fish with endangered Higgins' eye pearlymussel glochidia at the Genoa NFH during a job-shadow assignment on April 21, 2004. (photo credit: Mark Steingraeber).

Natasha Nelson, a member of the junior class at Bangor (WI) High School with a keen interest in biology spent a long anticipated and enjoyable day on a job-shadow assignment to learn what fishery biologists do on a typical spring day. Natasha spent her day at the Genoa NFH amidst biologists from the Genoa NFH, La Crosse FRO, Twin Cities FO, Wisconsin DNR, and Minnesota DNR and played an active, fun-filled, and wet role in helping to inoculate thousands of host fish with Higgins' eye mussel glochidia -- a task she thoroughly enjoyed! Another highlight of her day was listening to the biologists' lunchtime discussion of strategies to begin propagation efforts for the endangered winged mapleleaf mussel in 2004. As Natasha described it, "It was so unlike high school because everyone listened to what everyone else had to say". Natasha was so enthusiastic about her experiences at the hatchery that by days' end, she was inquiring about Service employment opportunities for this summer. With career exploration experiences like this, it won't be as difficult to fill the big shoes (or long shadows) of the Service's dedicated biologists in years to come.

The shadows cast by a team of biologists working to propagate endangered Higgins' eye pearl mussels at the Genoa NFH were noticeably longer on April 21 than on any other day that busy week. However, this day-long anomaly did not appear to be related to any celestial events reported to authorities in western Wisconsin that day. Instead, the Guidance Department at nearby Bangor High School correlated the occurrence of these longer shadows to the presence of Natasha Nelson, a member of the junior class with a keen interest in biology, who spent a long anticipated and enjoyable day on a job-shadow assignment to learn what fishery biologists do on a typical spring day. Natasha spent her time here amidst biologists from the Genoa NFH, La Crosse FRO, Twin Cities FO, Wisconsin DNR, and Minnesota DNR and played an active, fun-filled, and wet role in helping to inoculate thousands of host fish with Higgins' eye mussel glochidia -- a task she thoroughly enjoyed! Another highlight of her day was listening to the biologists' lunchtime discussion of strategies to begin similar propagation efforts for the endangered winged mapleleaf mussel in 2004. As Natasha described it, "It was so unlike high school because everyone listened to what everyone else had to say". Natasha was so enthusiastic about her experiences at the hatchery that by days' end, she was inquiring about Service employment opportunities for this summer. With career exploration experiences like this, it won't be as difficult to fill the big shoes (or long shadows) of the Service's cadre of dedicated biologists in years to come.

Mark Steingraeber